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ABSTRACT

This presentation provides teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) with an outline for a seven-session course entitled "Great American Films," which is designed to teach ESL students about cultural, universal, and personal values through the use of popular American films. The presentation contains: (1) a course syllabus; (2) suggestions on teaching methods and classroom techniques; (3) short reviews of five popular American films from the 1970s and 1980s; (4) student activities; and (5) student questionnaires. During the course students view one entire film, such as "The Wizard of Oz," and clips from other films that emphasize a particular value or cultural trait. Students discuss American films, values, their favorite films, and the instructional value of films. They also participate in word games and vocabulary exercises, read particular roles of characters that they have viewed, and complete several questionnaires. At the end of the course students are divided into small groups and produce their own "mini-movie," a short scene that emphasizes a particular value. (MDM)

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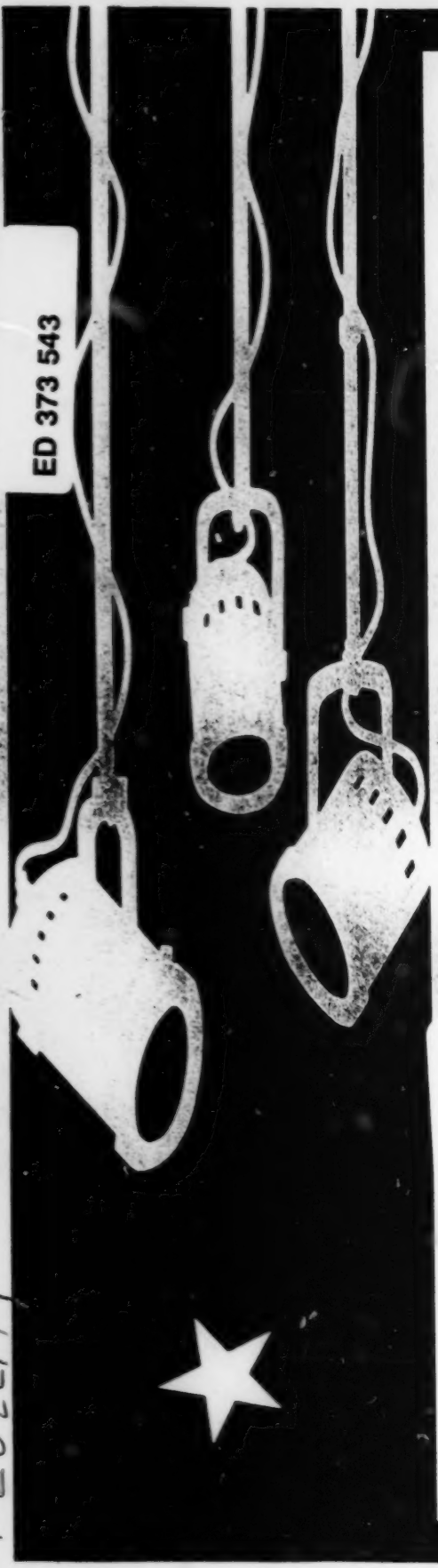

Teaching Values Through

American Movies

Kara Griffin
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March 12, 1994

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Values and American Movies
Course Outline

(Based on 90-minute periods)

DAY 1 **"Great American Films" Reading and Exercises**

DAY 2 **Introduction to *The Wizard of Oz***

"Why is it difficult to watch movies in English?"

"Can movies be teachers? What can movies teach you?"

Discuss values. Movies contain historical, cultural, personal, and universal values.

Discuss some ways we can learn about a movie character's values:

Visual:	studying facial expressions, gestures, setting, costumes
Linguistic:	studying paralanguage, word choice, tone (including pitch, intonation, rhythm), etc.
Cultural:	identifying values common to the target culture/making comparisons with the home culture
Historical:	making assumptions based on our knowledge of the time period upon which the story is based

Introduce the film and hand out Character List/1st Scene Adaptation/Glossary/Who Said It/Song Sheet

Adaptation of Scene 1:

A. Choral Reading. Read aloud to students, emphasizing stressed words. Have students follow chorally and highlight or underline stressed words.

B. Small Group Practice. Students read a role in a group of five-six. Practice stressing highlighted words.

C. Class Discussion. What does each character value?

D. Show Scene 1 of the movie.

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DAY 3 ***The Wizard of Oz***

Play **Pictionary** (Glossary and Pictionary cards)

Explain **Who Said It**

Show 45 minutes of the movie

Ask students to identify the new characters' values

DAY 4 ***The Wizard of Oz***

Finish watching the movie

Review characters' values: Did they get what they wanted? Did their values change? Did they get what they value?

Review **Who Said It** answers; discuss dialogue from the exercise which shows characters' values

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DAY 5	**Values Identification Activities**
Values Matching Game (Match dialogue with value statements)	
Movie Clips	Show 3-5 minute clips that clearly show one or more values (or lack of values). Films that have worked well in my class include *Pretty Woman, Beauty and the Beast, Batman, The Long Walk Home, Dead Poet's Society, An Officer and a Gentleman, Homeward Bound, and The Mighty Ducks.* Remind students to focus on stressed words and characters' attitudes. They don't have to be fluent to identify what a character values. Also, tell them to focus on their own feelings and reactions to the scene; this will help them identify their own values. For beginning and intermediate classes, prepare a set of value identification cards that they can work with in small groups to pick out the values they have noticed in the scene. If you wish to do skills work, the clips lend themselves to various techniques, such as muted pairs, cloze, true-false, fill-in missing lines of dialogue, and trivia competitions.

DAY 6	**Movie Clips/Test**
Movie Clips	Values/skills work
Test	Listening skills and values identification/critical thinking

DAY 7 **Minimovies**

Arrange students in groups of four to six. Hand out a minimovie value card to each group. Explain the rules of minimovies. Give students 60 minutes to write and practice a scene. Save 30 minutes for performances. At the end of each minimovie, the audience tells the value/values they saw in the minimovie.

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Great American Films: Teacher Instructions

About the Films Class

The course will give students the opportunity to identify cultural, universal, and personal values by watching American movies. I'll be showing all of *The Wizard of Oz*, as well as clips from *The Long Walk Home*, *Dead Poet's Society*, and *Pretty Woman*.

Please make sure that students complete the reading and all exercises before the first Films class. We will probably use some of the glossed vocabulary words in the course, so it would be helpful if you would review the vocabulary with them. However, it isn't essential.

The Postreading Exercises

Exercises A & B are parts of the same activity. The goals of this activity are for students to: a) practice discussion skills, and b) identify factors in movies that appeal to them.

In groups, students will discuss several movies and choose one they could all watch. At the beginning of the exercise, you could ask the students if they have ever had disagreements with their friends or family about which movie to watch.

Cut the attached *sheets for Postreading Exercise A* along the dashed lines. Divide your students into groups of four. (There are five summaries on each page in case you have one group of five.) Give the students in each group a different movie summary. Then, ask students to:

A. Read their summaries silently until they feel they can remember what the movie is about. *Have them look up unknown words in the Longman dictionary.* (Note: I have found that most students know what the Oscars and Oscar nominations are.)

B. Tell each other a paraphrase of their summaries *without looking at their papers*. (However, if you have a very low group, you might want them to read their movie summaries aloud.)

C. Discuss the movies and choose **one** that the whole group would agree to see. (Note: If your students already have been introduced to discussion skills in their conversation classes, this is an opportunity for them to use the *Discussion Phrases* sheet.)

D. Write their opinions (in exercise B) individually.

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Great American Films
Sheet for Postreading Exercise A

Victor/Victoria (1982). This is a really funny musical directed by Blake Edwards. Set in 1930s Paris, it is a story about a poor woman (Victoria) who pretends to be a man ("Victor") in order to become famous as a male singer. A handsome man watches Victor sing, and he begins to fall in love with Victor. The handsome man doesn't know that Victor is really a woman, so he begins to wonder if he (the handsome man) is a homosexual.
Oscar nominations: Best Actress and Costumes

Arthur (1981). This is a funny comedy about Arthur, a lovable, middle-aged New York City millionaire who drinks too much alcohol. In fact, he is drunk most of the time. A nice, but poor, woman helps him to understand that he does not need money to be happy. His family tells him if he chooses to marry the poor woman, his family will take away all of his money.
Oscar nominations: Best Actor and Screenplay
Oscars: Best Supporting Actor and Song

Star Wars (1977). This science fiction film has the first modern computer-made special effects. Through many exciting adventures, Luke Skywalker and his friends discover the value of love, friendship, helping others, and learning to trust their feelings and spiritual beliefs.
Oscars: Best Set, Sound, Costumes, Special Effects

Jeremiah Johnson (1972). This is an exciting movie about a man, Jeremiah Johnson, who goes into the forest to live alone. He has some very bad experiences with other people and with nature (especially animals and the weather), but he learns how to take care of himself. Finally, he becomes very famous. The setting is beautiful, and the story is very well-acted.

Sounder (1972). This movie is about the problems of a poor Black family who works for a very mean farm owner during the 1930s. They have many problems, especially with racial discrimination. They are unable to save money and gain respect, but they love each other very much.
Oscar nominations: Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Screenplay, Best Picture

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Optional Activities

If you would like an additional activity or two, consider the following:

A. Synonyms/Antonyms

Included in the glossary are two synonyms for the word "great." Help students to further build their vocabularies by having them list synonyms and antonyms for the word "great." You could make this activity a game by dividing the class into teams and giving them a time limit to come up with as many synonyms and antonyms as they can. This activity would provide a good opportunity to introduce the thesaurus.

B. Discussions

1. In groups or as a class, discuss students' feelings about Japanese horror movies.

2. (Donovan's suggestion for a more advanced group) In groups or as a class, discuss the current debate about violence in the movies being the cause for societal deterioration. Violent movies from the U.S. are very popular in Japan. You could find out if your students have read about, and have opinions about, whether violence on TV and in the movies affects cultural values in Japan. Also, you could discuss whether violent American films have a different effect on Americans than they do on Japanese.

Great American
FILMS

I. Prereading

A. Popular American Movies. Put a check mark ( ) on the blanks next to all of the movies that you have seen. Then, answer the questions on the next page.

All-Time Top 50 American Movies*

_____ 1. E.T. The Extra Terrestrial (1982)
_____ 2. Star Wars (1977)
_____ 3. Return of the Jedi (1983)
_____ 4. Batman (1989)
_____ 5. The Empire Strikes Back (1980)
_____ 6. Ghostbusters (1984)
_____ 7. Jaws (1975)
_____ 8. Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981)
_____ 9. Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (1989)
_____ 10. Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom (1984)
_____ 11. Beverly Hills Cop (1984)
_____ 12. Back to the Future (1985)
_____ 13. Grease (1978)
_____ 14. Tootsie (1982)
_____ 15. Ghost (1990)
_____ 16. The Exorcist (1973)
_____ 17. Rain Man (1989)
_____ 18. The Godfather (1972)
_____ 19. Superman (1978)
_____ 20. Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977/1980)
_____ 21. Pretty Woman (1980)
_____ 22. Three Men and a Baby (1987)
_____ 23. Who Framed Roger Rabbit (1988)
_____ 24. Beverly Hills Cop II (1987)
_____ 25. Home Alone (1990)
_____ 26. The Sound of Music (1965)
_____ 27. Gremlins (1984)
_____ 28. Lethal Weapon 2 (1989)
_____ 29. Top Gun (1985)
_____ 30. Gone With The Wind (1939)
_____ 31. Rambo: First Blood Part II (1985)
_____ 32. The Sting (1973)
_____ 33. Rocky IV (1985)
_____ 34. Saturday Night Fever (1977)
_____ 35. Back to the Future, Part II (1989)
_____ 36. Honey, I Shrunk The Kids (1989)
_____ 37. National Lampoon's Animal House (1976)
_____ 38. Crocodile Dundee (1986)
_____ 39. Fatal Attraction (1987)
_____ 40. Platoon (1986)
_____ 41. Look Who's Talking (1989)
_____ 42. Die Hard 2 (1990)
_____ 43. Rocky III (1982)
_____ 44. Superman II (1981)
_____ 45. Coming to America (1988)
_____ 46. Total Recall (1990)
_____ 47. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
_____ 48. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937)
_____ 49. On Golden Pond (1981)
_____ 50. The Jungle Book (1967)

* Pre-1991. Listed by rank/title/date. Source: 1992 World Almanac, p. 308.

B. Your Favorite Movies. Write the names of your **favorite** American movies. Write your favorites from the above list, and also write any other favorites which are **not** on the above list. Your spelling doesn't have to be correct.

_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____

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*C. **Interview a Partner.*** Ask your partner these questions. Listen carefully to her answers, and write them on the lines. Also, answer your partner's questions. Before you begin, look at the glossary below to learn how to say some of your ideas in English.

1. What is one of your favorite American movies? _____
2. Why is it one of your favorites? _____
3. Tell me about one great or unforgettable scene you remember from the movie.

   _____

   _____
4. What emotion did you feel while watching this scene? _____ _____
5. In your opinion, why did you feel this emotion? _____

   _____

*D. **Glossary.*** Study these words before you read the next page.

a movie critic	a person whose job is to write his/her opinion about which movies are good and which aren't
outstanding	so much better than the others that the others are behind; in front of all others
superb	excellent; above in quality
the set design	the style of the buildings and scenery which are used for (and sometimes specially made for) a movie
the costumes	clothing that the actors wear in a film
the screenplay	the movie in written form, used by the director, actors, and others who help to make the movie
the setting	the historical, geographical and cultural situation of the story
five stars	the highest rating for a movie, e.g. "This is a five-star film! It's the best of the year!"
the cinematography	the way that the camera is used
a psychologist	a person skilled in the science of the human mind
to reflect	to show (for example, a mirror *reflects*)
harmony	peacefulness

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What Makes a Film Great?

Movie critics believe that great films have a combination of good qualities, such as outstanding set design and costumes, superb acting, a well-written screenplay, and a setting that is either highly unusual or historically and culturally correct. If a movie has these qualities, critics often write, "This film is a must-see! Five stars! One of the greatest movies of our time!"

I used to believe that if a critic thought a film was great, then I would surely like the film. However, I have discovered that I don't always agree with the critics. Furthermore, I don't always agree with my friends or my family about which movies are great and which are not.

In *your* opinion, what makes a film great? Is it the set design, costumes, actors, direction, cinematography, screenplay, or setting? Is it a combination of those things, or is it something more?

Psychologists say that a film is great when it reflects a person's own values. Our emotions show what we value. Do you value life? Then you might cry if someone dies of a terrible illness in a movie. Do you value harmony? Then you might be very uncomfortable when people shout at each other angrily in a movie. Do you want to find a wonderful boyfriend? Then your heart might beat strongly when you watch two young people fall in love. Movies, like good books, can help us to make decisions about how we *should* or should *not* live our lives. Great films help us discover our personal values. The next time you have strong feelings while watching a movie, think about what personal value inside of *you* that movie is reflecting. Movies can teach you a lot about yourself.

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II. Postreading

A. ***Group Discussion: Choosing a Movie to Watch.*** Each of you will receive a description of a movie. Silently read your movie description a few times. Use your Longman English Dictionary if you need to. Then, *without looking at the description,* tell your group about your movie. As a group, discuss which movie you would all like to see if you could only see *one* of the movies. Write your group's decision on the line below.

We have agreed to watch _____

B. ***Giving Your Opinions.*** Now that you have chosen a movie to watch, write your *personal* opinions to the following questions.

1. Which movie did *you* most want to see? _____
2. Did the others agree with you? _____
3. Did you all quickly agree on a movie? Why, or why not?

   _____

   _____

   _____
4. Of the movies you just heard about, which ones do you think *might* reflect your own personal values? _____

   _____

   Why do you think so?

   _____

   _____

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C. Personal Values.

Look again at the list of movies you wrote on the first page of this reading. Think about the emotions you felt while watching these movies; your emotions probably reflect your personal values. Now, choose five films from your list. Write the emotions you felt while watching the movie. Finally, write the values or beliefs that *you believe* are reflected by your emotions.

Remember, write your *opinions*. There are no right or wrong answers.

Example:

MOVIE	YOUR EMOTION	VALUE OR BELIEF
1. *Wall Street*	upset	greed is bad
2. *Beauty and the Beast*	very happy and excited	personality is more important than physical beauty
3. *Home Alone*	confused	parents should not forget their children

Your Own Examples:

MOVIE	YOUR EMOTION	VALUE OR BELIEF
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

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The Wizard of Oz
Adaptation - Scene One

Dorothy lives in a **very** poor farming area in the **country**. The land is **empty** and **ugly**. Her farm is **old** and **simple**. Her family must work **very hard**. The scene begins with Dorothy and Toto going **home**. Dorothy is very **worried** because she **loves** her dog very much, but her dog **always** causes trouble in the neighbor's garden. The **neighbor**, Miss Gulch, told Dorothy that she will have Toto **killed**. **Dorothy** wants to talk to her family and friends to ask for **advice**. She **begins** to talk to her aunt and uncle, but they are **too** busy and they tell her to go **away**. Then, she sees the **farmhands** and talks to **them**.

(Zeke and Hunk are working together.)

Zeke	Are you almost finished?
Hunk	Take it easy, Zeke...Ow, you hit my finger!
Zeke	Well, why don't you get your finger out of the way? There you are...we're finished.
Zeke	You're lucky that it wasn't your head!
Dorothy	Zeke, what am I going to do about Miss Gulch? Just because Toto chases her old cat....
Zeke	Listen, honey, I'm too busy to talk to you. I have to put the pigs in their pen.
Hunk	Dorothy, you aren't being intelligent about Miss Gulch. Maybe you don't have any brains at all.
Dorothy	I do too have brains!
Hunk	Well, why don't you use them? When you come home, don't walk near Miss Gulch's house. Then, Toto won't get into her garden, and you won't get into any trouble. Understand?
Dorothy	Oh, Hunk, you don't understand my problem.
Hunk	You're not a stupid girl. Don't act like one.

(Dorothy starts walking on top of the fence.)

Zeke	Hey, pigs, get into your pen before I kill you. Listen, Dorothy, don't let that old Gulch lady scare you. You don't need to be afraid of her. Have a little courage.
Dorothy	I'm not afraid of her.

Zeke — The next time she shouts, walk right up to her and spit in her eye. That's what I'd do.

(Dorothy begins to fall into the pigpen.)

Dorothy — Oh, oh,...help....Get me out of here!

Hunk — Are you all right, Dorothy?

Dorothy — Yes, I'm all right. I fell in and Zeke...why, Zeke, you're just as scared as I am!

(Dorothy, Hunk, and Hickory laugh at Zeke.)

Hunk — What's the problem? Are you going to let a little old pig make a coward out of you?

Hickory — Look at you, Zeke, you're just as white as....

Auntie Em — Here, here...Stop talking! There's work to be done. You will lose your jobs if you don't go back to work.

Hickory — Well, Dorothy was walking along and....

Auntie Em — I saw you playing over there, Hickory. Now you and Hunk get back to fixing that wagon.

Hickory — All right, Mrs. Gale, but I'm not really lazy. Someday I'm going to be the most famous person in town.

Auntie Em — Don't worry about that now. Here, here....you can't work on an empty stomach. Have some donuts.

Hunk — Gosh, Mrs. Gale.

Hickory — Thanks.

Zeke — You see, Dorothy fell into the pigpen....

Auntie Em — Dorothy shouldn't be near there. You go feed those pigs.

Dorothy — Auntie Em, really, do you know what Miss Gulch said she was going to do to Toto? She said she was going to....

Auntie Em — Now, Dorothy dear, stop dreaming. You always worry about nothing. Now you just help us out today by finding yourself a place where you won't bother us.

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Directions: First, read the dialogue carefully. Then write any answer that you think would be correct.

Scene: **an expensive clothing shop in Beverly Hills, California**
stuff = things

Shop clerk: _____?

Viv: Well, I'm just checking things out.

Shop clerk: _____?

Viv: No, No. Yeah. Uh, something conservative.

Shop clerk: _____.

Viv: You got a lot of stuff.

Shop clerk: _____.

Viv: How much is this?

Shop clerk: _____.

Viv: Well, I didn't ask if it would fit, I asked how much it was.

Shop clerk: _____,_____?

Marie (the second shop clerk): It's very expensive.

Shop clerk: _____.

Viv: Look, I got money to spend in here.

Shop clerk: I don't think we have anything for you. You're obviously in the wrong place. Please leave.

Questions

1. Write one or two reasons why a shop clerk might tell someone to leave.

   _____

2. Do you feel sorry for Viv? Why, or why not?_____

3. What do you think will happen next? Write a one-sentence ending to the scene.

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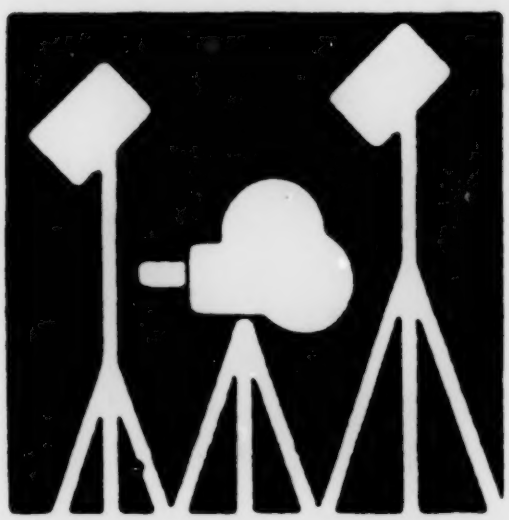
Rules for Minimovies

A. Prepare and practice: 60 minutes (1:00-2:00)

1. I'll give you a card with a value statement
2. Quickly talk about ideas for a scene showing the value
3. Write a script: Everyone must talk
   Don't say the value; **show it through character's emotions and emotional statements**
4. Make signs to identify your character
5. Can be from a real movie you have seen, or one you write yourself
6. Enjoy yourself! Making movies is fun!

B. Performances: 30 minutes (2:00-2:30)

1. Your scene should be about 5 minutes long
2. When you perform, **emote**!
3. You may hold your script, but **look up** when you speak.
4. **Face the audience** during your scene.
5. When you watch other performances, be polite:
   -quietly watch and listen to all minimovies
   -guess the minimovie's value



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